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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President of Russia (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Putin

Notetakers: David Mathews, Andrew Green, and
Jeff Houle

DATE, TIME April 12, 2002, 07:25 - 07:43 a.m., EDT
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Good morning, Vladimir. (U)

President Putin: Good afternoon, George. How are you? (U)

The President: I'm fine, sir. Thank you for taking my call. I have three things to talk to you about this morning. First, I thought about your suggestion of going to Italy and I accept. Obviously the discussions would be about NATO. After our phone call I will inform Berlusconi that if you still want to go forward, I would be honored to attend. (S)

President Putin: Thank you, I agree. (S)

The President: Good. Secondly, the chicken issue, poultry, has risen again and we must solve this. I must be honest with you. I know you are frustrated. I'm frustrated. I think your Ministry of Agriculture has got some bureaucracy that doesn't want an agreement. We must work closely on this, friend. I assure you, we have adhered to the protocol, and we want to get this solved. I know you have designated your Prime Minister. I urge you, Vladimir, to tell him, if you don't mind, that this must work, as opposed to allowing low-level people preventing it from working. I know we can get this done. Believe me, our inspectors are good. If not, we would be shutting down plants

all over America. We don't want our people to eat lousy chickens, and we don't want your people to eat lousy chickens. That's all I have on the chickens. (S)

President Putin: What's the third question? (S)

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(The President: The third issue is this; we are making great progress in the strategic arms discussions, but we are stuck on one point. That is, how to count the warheads. I'm no expert in arms control speak, but it seems to me that it ought to be pretty easy to count warheads. A warhead is a warhead. When I told you that we would reduce our warheads to 1,700 to 2200, I meant that. We weren't talking about launchers. We were talking about warheads. I think you understood. We are willing to have full transparency. People can come and see what we have. Obviously, there is full trust between us, but if there is distrust between our bureaucracies, then please come and count. We can't get caught in a bureaucratic struggle about how to count. I propose getting it out of the experts hands and into high level channels. I can designate me and you can designate yourself, or somebody at a high level. I am confident we can have a good agreement. Other than the Middle East, that's all I have on my mind. (S)

President Putin: Thank you George. Thank you for this call. You have disarmed me with your agreement to go to the meeting in Rome. This problem with poultry, I want to resolve it as soon as possible. There was a protocol that was agreed upon and more than half of the issues in the protocol have been complied with on the U.S. side. I believe that both of us have to press our bureaucracies and I am sure we can solve this problem. (S)

(The President: Thank you. (S)

President Putin: There is one systemic problem I would like to relay to you. I have been told that the veterinarian decisions in the United States have transferred from the government to the producers. That's why there are a lot of mistakes. These bureaucrats (chinovniki). This is the systemic problem I am talking about. This is the problem. So as I said the right to deal with the documentation has been transferred from the government to the producers of poultry and this has been the source of the problem. I repeat that very soon we will get this resolved. (S)

The President: Great, Vladimir, I'm sorry for interrupting, but I want to assure you that our inspectors are federal inspectors. We don't allow somebody to inspect themselves. There is a federal inspection. I need to clear that up, because it is important for you to understand that our standards are federally enforced. (S)

President Putin: Alright, fine George. Let's work on them. (S)

(The President: Good. (S)

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President Putin: We will demand that they fulfill their obligations. On my side, I will push my people and I ask that you push your people, too, so we get this resolved. ~~(S)~~

The President: Okay. ~~(S)~~

President Putin: As far as the meeting on NATO, I believe this is very important and I thank you once again for that. On about the 28, we are scheduled to meet with the EU leadership for the EU-Russian Summit. I think I will talk to Aznar and we will give this meeting priority. Because the Russia-NATO relationship is very important and I think, for Europe, this is global in nature. ~~(S)~~

The President: Yes. ~~(S)~~

President Putin: I would also like to thank you for your support during the hearings on repealing the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. I have been told that your administration representatives took a very correct and tough position which is helpful. ~~(S)~~

The President: Yes. ~~(S)~~

President Putin: About the third issue, I am aware of the START problems. I believe we will be able to overcome all this. We are also scheduling consultations for the 23rd or 24th with our experts, and also Minister Ivanov and Secretary Powell will be meeting in Washington at the beginning of May to discuss this, as well. I am convinced, in any event that we will find formulas that will be acceptable to both sides. I will also like to make a final note about the positive work that we have done in terms of our cooperation on the Middle East. I think Ivanov and Powell have done a great job on that, and I am looking forward to our meeting in Moscow. ~~(S)~~

The President: Good. You and I will need to continue our discussions so that if our experts, who don't want an agreement, bog this down we can get this unstuck. That's what leaders are supposed to do. Secondly, as to NATO, I look forward to a good meeting. You need to know the reason I decided to come was because of your influence. I thank you for your suggestion and your friendship. I hope you have a great weekend and if necessary we can continue to discuss matters up to the meeting. ~~(S)~~

President Putin: Well thank you very much, George. I am also very glad to hear from you and I would like to reserve the right to call you if the need arises. ~~(S)~~

The President: Yes, please. Have a great weekend. (U)

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President Putin: Alright. And all the best, George, to your family. (U)

The President: Thank you. Same to you sir. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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